

THE EPITOME OF VESALIUS

Another notable acquisition for the Library
described by

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TWO YEARS AGO, in vol. 25 of the *Annals* of the College we were able to describe a newly acquired copy of the very rare English version of the *Compendiosa delineatio* of Thomas Geminus, 1553, a piracy of the *Epitome*



Fig. 1.

of Vesalius, 1543. This had been acquired by private purchase and formed an important addition to the series of Vesalian textbooks in the Library of the College. Recently the College has bought at Sotheby's auction rooms another related volume of somewhat lesser importance, but nevertheless of great interest. This is a later imitation of the Geminus dated 1600 on the title page and 1601 in the colophon. It was printed and published in Cologne and has an *Epistola Dedicatoria* addressed to the *Consules ac Senatores* of the City signed by *Henricus Botterus*, dean *pro tempore* of the Medical Faculty of the University. The book, a large folio, contains

the full Latin text of the *Epitome* preceded by a six-line Latin verse in praise of Vesalius. The 40 engraved plates, copied from those in the Geminus of 1545, had already been used in Jacob Bauman's *Anatomia Deudsch*, Nürnberg, 1557, a German version of the *Epitome*. For this reason the legends on the plates are in German, although the text is in Latin. Having been used before, the plates have given somewhat weak impressions in the edition of Botter, but they include the large "Adam and Eve" plate missing from the College copy of the English Geminus. Botter has, however, added a newly engraved copy (Fig. 1) of the woodcut portrait of Vesalius in the *Fabrica* of 1543, and this is one of the earliest reproductions of the only authentic likeness of the great anatomist. The engraved title-page (reproduced here, Fig. 2) is an enlarged and somewhat altered version of the title-page of Valverde's *Anatomia del corpo humano*, Rome, 1560, which also contains copper-plate versions of the Vesalian wood-cuts.

The book is an unsophisticated copy bound in contemporary vellum, and except for some unimportant water stains on a few leaves is in excellent condition. Former owners have left their inscriptions on both sides of the title-page. One, writing below the engraving, proudly announces himself as: *Paulus Olaides possessor legitimus*, with the date 2/4 1652. Below his signature he has added:

*O, cur, mors, Deus negat vitam
superbe bis, te, nus, bis, nam. Ergò,
Cum sis humi limus, esto humillimus.*

[Mr. Le Fanu interprets the cryptogram (line 2) as "superbe te tenus supernam" meaning:

O why, death, does God proudly
deny you life above. Therefore,
Since you are earth to earth, be very humble.]

Alongside the first signature is another: *Jacobus Pauli Postius*. On the back of the title-page the first Paulus has written a well-known Latin tag concerning the humours of the body:

*Vitalia hominis membra.
Corde homines sapiunt, est à pulmone loquela.
Splen risum, iram fel concitat, hepar amat.
Paulus Olaides P.S.*

[Man's vital members.
Men reason in the heart; speech is the lung's.
The spleen stirs laughter, the gall wrath, the liver loves.]

Another version of the lines is written below in a different hand:

*Cor sapit et pulmo loquitur, fel commovet iras,
Splen ridere facit, cogit amare jecur.
Gladder Gladder!*

[Heart reasons, lung speaks, gall moves to wrath,
Spleen causes laughter, liver wakens love.]

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The meaning of the last two words, written in yet another hand, is obscure.

This edition of the *Epitome* was doubtless used up in the dissecting rooms of the German medical schools and is now very uncommon. There are two copies in the Cologne City Library; others are to be found in the National Medical Library, Washington, D.C.; Michigan University (Crummer Collection); Upsala University Library (Waller Collection);

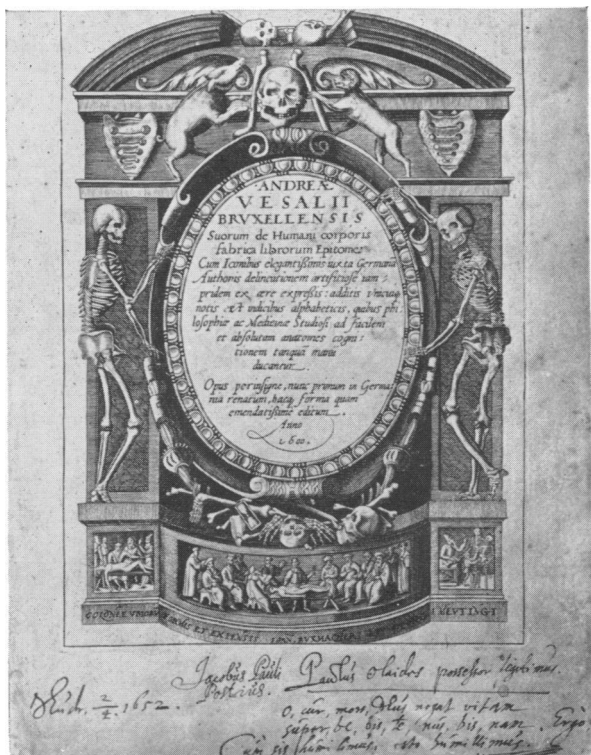


Fig. 2.

Yale Medical Library (Fulton Collection). Harvey Cushing had a copy (now also at Yale) in which the dedication is signed *Decanus facultatis Medicae* without Botter's name. There is a copy in the Wellcome Historical Medical Library.

The collation of the book given in Cushing's *Bio-bibliography of Vesalius* is not quite correct. The fact that this copy is in its original binding has made it possible to establish the actual constitution of the volume as given below.

Bibliographical description

VESALIUS: EPITOME edited by Henry Botter. Cologne. 1600–1601.

Engraved title: ANDREÆ / VESALII / BRUXELLENSIS / Suorum de Humani corporis / fabrica librorum Epitome: / Cum Iconibus elegantissimis iuxta Germanā / Authoris delineationem artificiosè iam=/ pridem ex ære expressis: additis unicuiq. / notis et indicibus alphabeticis, quibus phi=/ losophiæ ac Medicinæ Studiosi ad facilem / et absolutam anatomes cogni=/ tionem tanquā manu / ducantur. / Opus perinsigne, nunc primum in Germa=/ nia renatum, hacq. forma quam / emendatissimè editum. / Anno / 1600.

Imprint at the bottom of the engraving: COLONIE VBIORV FORMIS ET EXPENSIS IOAN. BUXMACHERI ET GEORGII MEVTINGI.

Colophon: COLONIAE AGRIPPINAE, / Typis Stephani Hemmerden. / ANNO M. DCI.

Collation: f°. *⁴, A–G⁶, H⁴; 50 leaves without pagination; 40 plates of which 38 are inserted through the text, lettered A–Z, a–r. Size of page 380 × 245 mm.

Contents: *1a engraved title, verso blank; *2a–3b *Epistola Dedicatoria* signed *Henricut Botterus, D. ac facultatis / Medicæ pro tempore Decanus*. *4a *In commendationem huius operis ad studiosos Hexastichon*; *4b engraved portrait of Vesalius; A1a–B5b text of *Epitome*; B6 plates B and C on recto and verso; C1a–H4b remainder of text. 38 plates inserted.

Note: As in a copy mentioned by Cushing (*A Bio-bibliography of Vesalius*, 1943, VI.D.-10, p. 135) the editor's first name is misprinted *Henricut*, and this has been corrected by pen. According to the collation given by Cushing section B contains five leaves, but this is incorrect. Close examination of our copy shows that the leaves B1 and B2 are conjugate; B3 is conjugate with a leaf carrying the two plates lettered B and C and B4 is conjugate with B5. Clearly the leaf with the plates is B6, though the binder of our copy has sewn the three pairs of leaves separately, so that B6 comes between B3 and B4. These two plates, therefore, on one leaf are not insertions, but are part of the book. The other 38 plates, all printed on one side of the leaves only, are insertions and are mostly on thinner paper than the rest of the book.